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FROM AMBASSADOR HILL FOR ARA/ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AR
SUBJECT: MILITARY TAKE COGNIZANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

1. DIEGO MEDUS (PROTECT), CHIEF OF NORTH AMERICAN DESK AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, CONFIDED TO ME AT LUNCH ON FEB 13 THAT HE HAS BEEN ASKED BY "THE MILITARY PLANNING GROUP" TO PREPARE A STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO HOW THE FUTURE MILITARY GOVT CAN AVOID OR MINIMIZE THE SORT OF PROBLEMS THE CHILEAN AND URUGUAYAN GOVTS ARE HAVING WITH THE US OVER HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. MEDUS SAID HE HAD TOLD THEM THEY WILL HAVE TROUBLE IF THEY START EXECUTING PEOPLE. THE OFFICERS REPLIED THAT THEY INTEND TO CARRY FORWARD AN ALL-OUT WAR ON THE TERRORISTS AND THAT SOME EXECUTIONS WOULD THEREFORE PROBABLY BE NECESSARY. THEY WISH TO MINIMIZE ANY RESULTING PROBLEMS WITH THE US, HOWEVER, AND THEREFORE ASKED MEDUS TO PREPARE A STUDY.

2. ADDITIONALLY, HERIBERTO KAHN OF LA OPINION TOLD OUR POLITICAL SECTION ON FEB 13 THAT IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL VIOLA, HE HAD RAISED THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND POINTED OUT THAT ANY FUTURE MILITARY GOVT SHOULD AVOID STEPS WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO PROBLEMS WITH THE US CONGRESS SUCH AS THOSE THE PINOCHET GOVT IS HAVING. VIOLA HAD REPLIED THAT THE ARGENTINE MILITARY ARE VERY AWARE OF THIS, WISH TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US AND TO AVOID PROBLEMS OVER HUMAN RIGHTS OR OTHER ISSUES. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE HE, VIDELA AND SEVERAL OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

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FULLY, THERE ARE MANY OFFICERS BELOW THEM WHO DO NOT AND WHO WISH TO TAKE STRONG MEASURES EVEN IF SUCH MEASURES OFFEND THE US CONGRESS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING WILL BE NEEDED ON BOTH SIDES.

3. COMMENT: IT IS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT THE ARGENTINE MILITARY ARE AWARE OF THE PROBLEM AND ARE ALREADY FOCUSING ON WAYS TO AVOID LETTING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES BECOME AN IRRITANT IN US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS.
HILL

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